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CAREX PETRICOSA **ROCK SEDGE**

Rock Sedge is a grass-like perennial with stems 10-30 cm tall in loose clusters arising from short to elongate rhizomes or stolons. The lowest leaves are reduced to scales. Stem leaves are flat, 2-3 mm wide, and crowded just above these scales. Flowers are borne in 3-5 short, cylindrical spikes on erect or ascending stalks arising from the axils of short, narrow, leaf-like bracts at the top of the stem. The uppermost spike has male flowers above and perigynia below. The lower spikes are all female. Lance-shaped perigynia lack a beak and are 4-6 mm long and ca. 1.5 mm wide. Scales are purplish black with a lighter center and are shorter than the perigynia they subtend. Each perigynium has 3 stigmas and an achene that is 3-sided. Fruit mature in August.

Numerous species of high elevation sedge are superficially similar to *CAREX PETRICOSA*; however, most have terminal spikes with male flowers below the perigynia rather than above. *C. SPECTABILIS* also differs in having scales as long as the perigynia. *C. CAPILLARIS* has smaller perigynia. A hand lens or microscope and technical key are needed for positive identification.